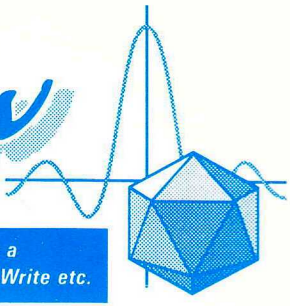
RM User

Volume 12:6
July 1998

FX Draw



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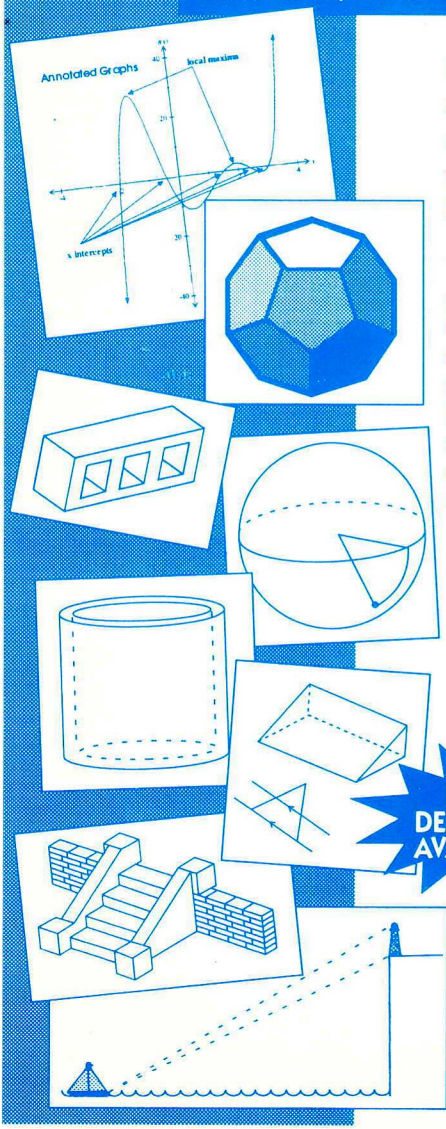

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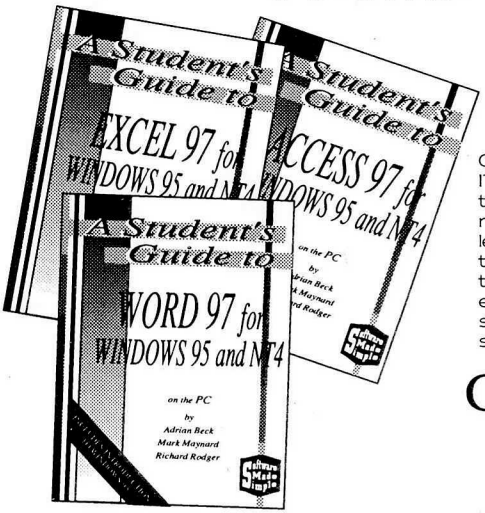

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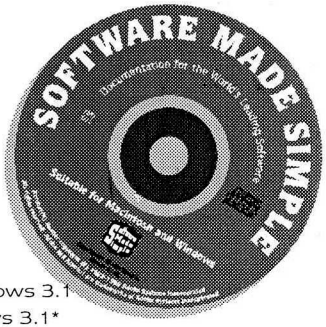

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Deadlines for the next issues

RM User 13.1 ..... 20 October 1998
RM User 13.2 ..... 20 January 1999

The date shown above is the latest date for copy for the magazine. You will normally receive the magazine about 2-3 weeks after the date shown.

Missing a Magazine?

Back issues of the magazine are available from the editor - please contact me for more details. I am delighted to announce that through the kind assistance of Tim Clark, we now have the URL www.rmug.org.uk. Diana Rolf has been helping to re-organise the site and I am sure she will be grateful for any feedback. There is a list of phone numbers of the suppliers who have been reviewed in the past, contents pages and a few articles.

Committee Members 1997/1998

Chairman Howard Kirkman	St Julians School, Heather Rd, ... 01633 213226 Newport, Gwent, email hkirkman@rmplc.co.uk
Vice-Chair Col. Norrie Wallace	St Dunstan's College, Stanstead Rd Catford, SE6 4TY 0181 690 1274
Secretary Edith Todd	19 Harvey Rd, Walton-on-Thames, ... 01932 242350 (H) Surrey, KT12 2PZ ..... 01932 863560 (S) Notre Dame Sen. Sch, Cobham, Surrey
Treasurer Hugh Wilding	The Bungalow Ray Lea Road ..... 01628 671633 Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 8QA email hugh@technocom.com
Membership Secretary Maureen Wernham	RMUG FREEPOST ..... 0181 398 1948 Esher, Surrey KT10 0BR 40 Manor Drive, Hinchley Wood, Esher, Surrey, KT10 0AX
Advertising Manager Gisela Legg	Restholm, Piddington Lane, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP143BD email100576,3717@compuserve.com
Editor David Palmer	Ackworth School, Pontefract, ... 01977 615225 West Yorkshire, WF7 7LT email palmerdavid@compuserve.com
Software Librarian Peter Richards	St Julians School, Heather Road, ... 01633 213226 Newport, Gwent
Information Officer	
John Holden	51 Cardigan Rd, Reading, RG1 5QL 01734 662689
John Fothergill	Bedales School, Steep ..... 01730304256 (S) Hants, GU32 2DG email jcf@bedales.org.uk
Julie Cosgrove	34 Rickford Rd, Nailsea Bristol BS19 2QB ..... 01275857523 (S)
Sian Tilley	Eggbuckland Community College Westcott Close, Plymouth ..... 01752779061 (S)

Advertising in the Magazine

Full and half page advertisements can be placed in the magazine and details can be obtained from the Advertising Manager. We also take classified ads and members may place free ads for surplus equipment in MicroMart.

Rates

Back Cover **£60** Inside Cover **£50** Full Page **£30** Half Page **£20**

These rates assume black-on-white, camera ready copy. Please avoid dot-matrix output. Typesetting is charged at cost and is additional to the above rates. Please make cheques payable to *RM User Group*

NEWS AND EDITORIAL

Role-lag

An unexpected (by me anyway) result of going from six to three issues per year has been the time it takes to re-fit the mindset that goes with wearing the editor's hat. If only half a term had gone by it was quite easy - but with a whole term it is much harder. Plans are now well advanced for the next training weekend. The schedule has been adapted to start on Saturday which will hopefully avoid the stress that many suffered in travelling on the Friday evening which some motoring organisations called 'Black Friday'. As usual there will be a mix of high-powered training courses and the camaraderie which some find as useful if not more so. RM always support this event in good style - and please remember that RMUG is an independent organisation - but this year they are certainly pulling out the stops! This is an event where you can genuinely pick up INSET credits for gaining new skills but also get a lot of empathy from fellow professionals who understand your problems better than anyone in your staffroom. Some schools have recognised how functional the weekend can be to the point where they send non-IT staff too. Sadly this is the exception rather than the rule and at the other end of the spectrum there are some attendees whose schools are so miserly that they pay for their own costs. This is surely a very sincere recommendation. If you have never been to the training weekend perhaps this is the year to go for it.

HTML everywhere

I don't know how anyone expects His Billness to take ie4 out of Windows 98. If you have a document in Word and use the 'Save as HTML' option, you immediately get a new set of extra buttons on the toolbar. One of these is the now familiar Links button. I did this and when I saw the Links button thought I'd use it. When I had, the link looked like a link - so I clicked on it . . . . and the page that belonged to the link appeared in Word - even though it was from an external site. I think that in a very short space of time we will take this kind of behaviour for granted. Indeed, last week I went to a presentation by a Microsoft evangelist on Outlook 98. He said that one of his slides was now out of date since there had been some changes made in the launch schedule. I immediately wondered why he hadn't used an imported object in his slide? We have had OLE and DDE for ages now but when the trick is done (as it surely will) over the web then it will be a lot more efficient in this kind of setting. I was even more intrigued when talking to another man-from-Microsoft about the high spec needed to run Access. He said that 'No-one in Microsoft uses Access now.' Apparently they use SQL Server, running on the server rather than the station, and massage the data through controls in . . . web pages.

On the Road Again

In their excellent roadshow RM show how you can integrate the school, the home and the community by developing your school internet areas and including a private on-line logon. I thought this was all rather Blue Sky stuff and some way off - but now I am not so sure. I suspect that we will doing something along those lines as soon as

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September. It is even more startling then to find that the time-frame for a lot of the plans on the National Grid for Learning seems to be set in years rather than months. Which reminds me of a very strange correspondence I had recently with a national computer publication. They recently offered a 17inch monitor for the best reader's letter - which could be serious or amusing. I decided (as I am sure you will agree) that I was better suited for the second category. I wrote an email saying that:- 'Today Tony Blare announced that the government would be devoting considerable funds to the 4-to-5--figure date problem. He was sure that Britain would lead Europe in its approach to this crisis. Senior civil servants were quoted as saying that at last the government had given them a timeframe in which they could function positively and that when the year rolled over from 9999 to 10,000, Britain would be ready' . . .

I received an almost instantaneous reply from the editor:- 'When did Tony Blair say this?'

I explained that I had been aiming at the 'amusing' category, and that that was the reason why I had used the spelling 'Blare' instead of 'Blair'. In a flash, the next reply bounced back,

'Yes, but ARE our computers really going to have a problem in 9999?'

While we are in this vein, watch out for the latest toy from the East - the Lovegetty! You set your preferences (karaoke, chat, friends . .) and if you pass by a stranger who has made the same choice your (and their) Lovegetty will beep . . .

MICROSOFT BUYS FIREFLY FOR ITS PRIVACY TECHNOLOGY Microsoft has acquired Firefly Network Inc., a spinoff of the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, Mass., and plans to move Firefly's 70 employees to Microsoft headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Using artificial intelligence techniques, Firefly developed technologies for both data filtering and privacy. Its filtering technology provides a method for comparing a computer user's observed tastes, preferences and behavior to that of other users on whom similar data have been collected — and then, based on those comparisons, making recommendations on such things as books and movies that the user would probably like. Its privacy technology is intended to give computer users control over the personal information collected by Web sites, and to support the new privacy standard called P3P (Platform for Privacy Preferences Project) now being developed by the World Wide Web Consortium, an Internet standards group. Microsoft says it is interested mainly in Firefly's privacy technology rather than its filtering technology, but acknowledges that "our plans are a little squishy now." Privacy advocates are expressing concern that integration of Firefly technology into Microsoft's Internet Explorer software for browsing the Web would significantly expand the scope of personal information that can be tracked on individuals using the Internet. (New York Times 10 Apr 98)

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INTERSPORT

by Diana Rolf

Everyone in our house is mad on sport - as long as someone else is doing it! We pound cushions at failure, hurl the cat into the air at success, and thrill to the ripple of our co-ordinated musculature as we lean back in our chair, stretch our legs and crack open another can.

I suspect we're in no way unusual, for Sport is very big business on the Internet and there are plenty of excellent sites. To find a particular sport, hop onto a Search Engine, jump into the sports section, tap your favourite into a box, then call up all your dodging and weaving skills to tack through the serried ranks of ads, long-defunct personal homepages from Timbuktu, and special offers from sales reps (pretending to be personal homepages from Timbuktu). If you're new to the Net some of the main search engines are Excite at http://www.excite.com, Alta Vista at http://altavista.digital.com/, Infoseek at http://www.infoseek.com/, Lycos at http://www.lycos.com/ and Yahoo at http://www.yahoo.com/. There are many others and everyone has a favourite, but it's worth trying more than one because they all fetch websites in different ways so the resulting lists can vary. Sport usually features prominently so you'll have plenty of choice.

A good place to start is the Sky Sports page at http://www.sky.co.uk/sports/center/index.htm which is written up daily, and beautifully laid out - useful if you're searching in a hurry. It has plenty of news and links to all kinds of sports. A similar site is Sports Web at http://www.sportsweb.com/ which has a newspaper format, daily update, photos and a shop. The British Olympic Association is at http://www.olympics.org.uk/ and has links to National and International Olympic Sports Federations, 'Olympism' and the recent Winter Sports in Nagano, Japan. The Olympic Movement, official site of the International Olympic Committee, has a spectacular site at http://www.olympic.org/ but you'll need Internet Explorer or Netscape 4 to view it. There is even a WWW Women's Sports Page by American sports fan Amy Lewis at http://fiat.gslis.utexas.edu/~lewisa/womsprt.html which has links to sports featuring women (and no, I didn't look for Mud-wrestling!).

There are so many sites on Golf that devotees can't fail to have a ball. A famous site is GolfWeb at http://www.golfweb.com/, a CBS Sportsline site, with a free newsletter, bags of news and events, and editions in Europe and Japan. Golf Online, at http://www.golfonline.com/ is the official website of *Golf Magazine* and *Golf Week*, and is a fact-filled, action-packed site, with news, events, a shop, and a daily update. The Golf Channel at http://www.thegolfchannel.com/ is another CBS site serving the *Golf TV Channel*, with live chat and a Japanese edition.

Tennis fans are also well-served with their very own Tennis Search Engine

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at Tennis.org.uk, http://www.tennis. org.uk/ and magazine spin-offs like Tennis Today at http://www.tennis.org.uk/tennistoday/ which has a Club House where you can post up messages, and Tennis.com at http://www.tennis.com/ which has a Spanish section and a keyword search. Tennis Worldwide is at http://www.tennisw.com/ and has tennis software, players' homepages, businesses, scoreboards, messages, chat and an archive. The Tennis Server is at http://www.tennisserver.com/ and offers a free e-mail newsletter and sections on rules, codes, clubs, and photos (yum!). Both these sites are rich in information but easy on ads, so they're quick to use.

For Cricket fans a good all-rounder is Cric Info ("Web-site-of-the-year-1997") at http://www.cricket.org/ which has five mirror sites - for the UK, US, India, SA and Australia (they all looked much the same to me!), but they had plenty of reporting and links to other countries. The Lord's site at http://www.lords.org/ looks awful - don't be put off by the dreary grey text on the title page (*Ash-coloured - geddit?*). The links spring into all sorts of coloured frame-sets and video clips, trapping the unwary into full QTVR Surround Tours of the Long Room and film-shows of games in play. There are match reports available on The Age @ the Ashes, at http://www.theage.com.au /sport/ashes/ which is part of the Australian site The Age On-line. There's a set of links to global National Cricket Associations at SCG Cricket Links, (from Sydney Cricket and Football Stadium) at http://www.scgt.oz.au/crick.html. By the time you read this the World Cup will doubtless be Ancient History and cats and cushions up and down the land will have long since checked into a Refuge, but if you want to relive it all there are some spectacular sites to keep you going. France 98 at http://www.france98.com is *très chic* and also bi-lingual - so you could use it in French lessons as an excuse! WC98 at http://www.wc98.com is not so elegant (hardly surprising, with a name like that) but has sections in English (in- or ex-UK), German, Spanish and Italian. Lárazo Candal's World Cup Soccer Pages at http://www.cyberworld-online.com/wcpages.html will give you useful ammunition for bar-stool arguments, with sections on former World Cup encounters. But beware - some of the links here are hastily written and your browser may not parse them properly - if it fails, erase the space between the final slash and the date in the URL which appears in the location bar at top-screen and try again (well, it worked for me!). My personal favourite is Soccer World Cup 1998 at http://www.wldcup.com/ which has plenty of facts, fantasies, team line-ups, a busy message board and a lively chat-room - plenty of scope for Cat-hurling till well into next season!

If you are interested in trying a new contact manager, which has powerful email features go to

http://www.goace.com

and download a free copy. This is not a demo - it is the full unrestricted program. This offer is available only to members of your user group.

Use this Code bb125700-G when filling out the download form.

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CHILDREN'S COPYRIGHT AND WEB SITES

by Carol Rainbow

After quite happily producing a school web site full of children's work and pictures for over a year I suddenly became aware of issues concerning copyright. Having assumed, wrongly, for one year that we could use children's work in documents, school magazines etc because the copyright belonged to the school, it was a bit of a shock to realise that we were probably in breach of law if any one had questioned us.

I read a document on the web from America, which pointed out that it was against the law to publish children's work without parental permission and began to wonder about the situation here in the UK. I asked several copyright experts who all came up with the same conclusion:

If someone produces work on their own for their own purposes the copyright belongs to them. If they create work for their employer the copyright belongs to the employer. Children are not employed by the school so the copyright belongs to them...they are not old enough to take responsibility for their own copyright, the responsibility must lie with the parents. To use children's work on web sites in this country the only safe assumption is that one needs parental permission.

To remedy the situation in our school I had to send out a letter and ask parents to sign giving me permission to use the children's work in retrospect. We now have an item in our admissions form covering this issue. I am pleased to report that it posed no problem...one condition was imposed; that for one child an abbreviated forename and single letter of her surname would be used to identify her work. This was not unreasonable...she must be the only child in the country with her name and this enabled a small amount of anonymity and therefore protection to be given to that child.

Carol Rainbow
IT Co-ordinator, The Manor CP School, Long Hanborough Oxford.
http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/manorlh/

Subject: Free Science Software From: Raymond Le Couteur
Please pass this message to Heads of Science in secondary schools.
The original version of the Sc1 Software, announced a week, ago only calculates marks for double science syllabuses (as used at our school). It now does the job for both single and double science.
The new version is available for download at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/RayLec/sc1.htm
It can be used and distributed freely.
Sorry for any inconvenience.
Ray Le Couteur

I downloaded this for our Head of Science and he said it was excellent!

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A GOOD STORY!

(received as email via Internet)

From: HARRIS BROS. (GAZETTE) LTD.,
INTERNET: harbro@pop3.mail.demon.net
Re: Microsoft Joke

An interesting joke on the Microsoft outlook versus the Apple outlook:

Three Apple engineers and three Microsoft employees are traveling by train to a conference. At the station, the three Microsoft employees each buy tickets and watch as the three Apple engineers buy only a single ticket. "How are three people going to travel on only one ticket?" asks a Microsoft employee. "Watch and you'll see," answers the Apple engineer.

They all board the train. The Microsoft employees take their respective seats but all three Apple engineers cram into a restroom and close the door behind them. Shortly after the train has departed, the conductor comes around collecting tickets. He knocks on the restroom door and says, "ticket, please." The door opens just a crack and a single arm emerges with a ticket in hand. The conductor takes it and moves on.

The Microsoft employees saw this and agreed it was quite a clever idea. So after the conference, the Microsoft employees decide to copy the Apple engineers (as they always do) on the return trip and save some money (being clever with money, and all that). When they get to the station, they buy a single ticket for the return trip.

To their astonishment, the Apple engineers don't buy a ticket at all. "How are you going to travel without a ticket?" asks one perplexed Microsoft employee. "Watch and you'll see," answers an Apple engineer.

When they board the train the three Microsoft employees cram into a restroom and the three Apple engineers cram into another one nearby. The train departs. Shortly afterward, one of the Apple engineers leaves his restroom and walks over to the restroom where the Microsoft employees are hiding. He knocks on the door and says, "Ticket, please..."

If you have ever been on a mailing list, you may appreciate the following:

Q: How many Internet mail list subscribers does it take to change a light bulb? A: 1,331

1 to change the light bulb and to post to the mail list that the light bulb has been changed.

14 to share similar experiences of changing light bulbs and how the light bulb could have been changed differently.

7 to caution about the dangers of changing light bulbs.

27 to point out spelling/grammar errors in posts about changing light bulbs.

53 to flame the spell checkers.

156 to write to the list administrator complaining about the light bulb discussion and its inappropriateness to this mail list.

41 to correct spelling in the spelling/grammar flames.

109 to post that this list is not about light bulbs and to please take this email exchange to alt.lite.bulb.

203 to demand that cross posting to alt.grammar, alt.spelling and alt.punctuation about changing light bulbs be stopped.

111 to defend the posting to this list saying that we all use light bulbs and therefore the posts **are** relevant to this mail list.

306 to debate which method of changing light bulbs is superior, where to buy the best light bulbs, what brand of light bulbs work best for this technique, and what brands are faulty.

27 to post URLs where one can see examples of different light bulbs

14 to post that the URLs were posted incorrectly, and to post corrected URLs.

3 to post about links they found from the URLs that are relevant to this list which makes light bulbs relevant to this list.

33 to concatenate all posts to date, then quote them including all headers and footers, and then add "Me Too."

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ARE ALL IT TEACHERS DOGSBODIES?

Are all IT teachers dogsbodies?
Date: September 15, 1996 04:43 AM
Author: SB
I teach science, IB ITGS, GCSE computing(17), year below GCSE (called 3rd year by us) and 2nd year. I am also HO.computing. In a week I teach 30/40 periods. Teaching is like a sideline, I also repair software problems, update software, help staff, write the curriculums for 3rd, 2nd and 1st years. How many periods do other computer teachers teach? Am I the biggest softie around?
Date: September 15, 1996 03:48 PM
Author: DK
I'm in a similar situation teaching 29 out of 40 periods covering Year 5 through to Year 13.
However it has been hinted that I may be getting a technician in the IT Dept!
Date: October 16, 1996 10:20 PM
Author: VJ
I sympathise with the two teachers bemoaning their fate as overworked IT teachers. I also teach 39 out of 50 sessions over a two week timetable and this includes teaching A level Geography (and below) and KS3 IT.
HOWEVER - I do have the assistance of an excellent technician - with over 150 computers in the school my job would be impossible without her help.
Can I also recommend the development and encouragement of some Year12 and 13 students. We have had some very successful students who have helped with tasks around the school like setup stations - sorting out printers etc. They do the work voluntarily but their reward is a statement on their NRA and always the possibility of a good reference or recommendation of their skills. For some of the students that we have we have used it has also greatly improved their social skills as well as their IT skills.
Over the last three weeks, our most recent recruits - a girl and a boy, have worked on a Powerpoint presentation which was given its premier at the Prospective parents meeting last night - something that they felt worthwhile, they received much praise for, and I would not have had the time to do. Try it - it does work!
Date: November 07, 1996 04:24 PM
Author:PT
well put it this way im a student on a gnvq it advanced I passed the intermediate last year 2 teachers were never there for their own reasons staff are overworked! but so are the students! I mean last year you needed 4 gcse's grade C and above to get on the advanced now you can get on with no qualifications at my college. This does not help the teaching staff they are left with a few "veterans" from last year that know what to expect but also there are these "newcomers" that have decided that it sounds cool to be on an advanced IT cource it would be ok if they were capable of doing the work. This adds a lot of unnessasery stress on the teaching atmosphere
Date: October 18, 1996 09:31 PM
Author:NA
We have decided to deliver IT across the curriculum except for year 7 who have 1 lesson per fortnight.
Even with a timetable of about 30% and an

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IT technician, it is difficult to deliver IT well. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who has a similar model and how they make it work.

Date: December 06, 1996 09:23 PM
Author: SS

Hi Unappreciated IT people, I have a cunning play for winning the adoration of all science teachers. Point them to this.... http://www.soton.ac.uk/~engenvir ...which will solve all their environmental teaching needs in one stroke. It will also help 4 engineering students at Southampton Uni, who need lots of visitors to do their project. Many Thanks

Date: December 13, 1996 02:00 PM
Author: BK

Yes today I certainly do feel like a dogsbody. I also feel that I am an extension of the office. That I don't do anything else with my overstretched time but sit around playing with computers.

Three networks, not a technician in site, IT Co-ordinator trying to deliver IT when no one is particularly interested in yet another new innovation is rather draining.

I deliver IT discretely to Year 7 for one hour ten minutes per week. By year 8 they do not have any experience of IT at all although it should be across the curriculum. In year 9 I am attached to Science and the pupils relearn the skills they have forgotten from Year 7. In Years 10 and 11 everyone is so busy that IT doesn't get a look in.

Was I under the impression that IT was now an independant NC subject and we should be teaching it as well as using it? Perhaps this is all a bad dream. It is almost the end of term. Have a well deserved rest all you wonderful IT teachers and co-ordinators and maybe the new year won't be such a nightmare after all.

Date: January 09, 1997 04:22 PM
Author: CP

Just thought I'd respond to your views on I.T teaching!

I currently teach Half I.T and half Science. Give me I.T teaching any day. Life is so easy in comparison. You don't kbow when you've got it good! Try teaching a real subject like Science for a week. Far more practical equipment to manage, for more weapons for the pupils, far too many books and exams to mark.. far more stress generally.

Date: January 20, 1997 07:01 PM
Author: AP

I must disagree with your comments. I currently teach 28 periods of science a week and 2 periods of IT a week (40 period week). I find teaching IT much harder and much more stressful. Reading some of the other letters about the IT Coordinators workload, I have to agree - we do far too much. I am IT Coordinator, Network Manager (130 station network, 1200 users) and Head of Lower School Science. I do have a helper to do the general run of the mill jobs of network management and help with the paperwork, but I am slowly sinking under the workload, especially trying to incorporate and build up the cross curricular IT. And then there's the assessment at KS 3 for this summer.....HELP!!

Date: January 12, 1997 11:44 AM
Author: HB

As an IT Teacher/Coordinator/Head/DogsBody/General Factotum, for the past .....years, I sympathise, really I do.

However, in 'its' wisdom I was retired early on health grounds last summer, and to supplement my pension I've created my own web pages - much of their content is unashamedly commercial.

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Date: November 11, 1997 03:28 PM
Author: AS
Subject: No they are not, some are just crooks.
I am a 6th form student at a school in North London. It has been rumoured that our IT teacher (Not only am I not allowed to state outright but I will not disclose his name either) is a crook. For example he was caught taking parts out of a boys computer and replacing them with substandard components. He gets commision out of selling computers to the school and subsequently we have now been swamped with low grade PC's that do not come even close to their contemporaries. Can he be prosecuted?
Date: November 20, 1997 01:35 PM
Author: IC Subject: IT
I do Not do IT at school, but my maths teacher is the IT co-ordinator at school and he is quite cool
Date: January 17, 1998 11:51 AM
Author: VA
Subject: Are all dogs ITish?
I am a long-in-the-toof Primary teacher and enjoy the job very much (sorry secondary folks for such an admission!). I have my curriculum finger in many pies, being a fulltime class teacher and co-ordinator for three subjects, i.e. Maths, Technology and I.T. At parties I claim to teach everything except Religion! I use I.T. in my teaching as a tool for learning. We are less interested in zapping the kids with megabytes, and more interested in getting 'bums on seats', i.e. giving the children access to programmes and experiences which will help their learning across the curriculum. We teach the I.T. bits en route. I had a RM 480Z machine (14 years old), as well as a more up to date Archimedes in my class until recently. The 480Z was brilliant for maths investigations and LOGO (Arrow). I have signed the school up to 'be wired up' for the internet in the second phase. I can see how I could use it in my teaching. However I have great reservations on justifying making a final commitment to going on line. It shouldn't be imposed on other colleagues. Six to eight hundred pounds a year is a lot of dosh to a Primary school. There is too much hype surrounding the internet. I would like to see a more balanced discussion take place nationally. 4% of UK households are wired up! Hardly a revolution? P.S. Who do you think decided on Tony's new hairstyle? Cheri or Mandelson? Maybe it was Nelson! Don't have chips with everyfink!!!

These comments come from a discussion area on the internet that seems to strike a few chords so I thought I'd pass them on to you.

NEW MULTIMEDIA WEB BROWSER FROM MICROSOFT Microsoft has developed a Web browser code-named Chrome and designed to deliver TV-quality 3-D animation and high-fidelity sound at dramatically improved download times. Chrome, which will be an option on Windows 98, will work only on high-end Windows-based computers not generally available at the present time. It will send Web pages in "skinny" text instructions that will be interpreted for optimum display. (AP 26 Mar 98)

WORRIED ABOUT Y2K? NOW THERE'S D10K Experts predict financial software may go haywire if the Dow Jones Industrial Average tops 10,000. Many software programs are designed to handle only four-digit Dows, says one software designer, who says that concern over the D10K problem soon "will spawn the usual parade of opportunists" to fix the bug. (Wall Street Journal 26 Mar 98)

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INTERACTIVE PROJECT FOR WORLD BOOK DAY

by Carol Rainbow

After about eighteen months on-line trying to generate interest around the educational fraternity in interactive projects and only being successful with schools in The States who are slightly more advanced than we are in using the Internet for education, I was pleasantly surprised on the eve of World Book Day to receive an e-mail from a school in Wales asking us to join them in producing a story on-line.

I agreed, it meant a year 6 group in a very tiny school and my year 3-4 class would have to work together...both schools being restricted more by the interest of the teachers involved than by anything else.

The morning arrived, I had explained to my opposite number that we had outdoor games first and if they started the story we would add to it before break. With great excitement we dialled up for our e-mail just about 10.15 whilst the children were changing their clothes. There was an e-mail there saying their assembly had really drawn out because they had children dressed as book characters and visitors in, so they had not finished the first chapter.

We received the first chapter after break and I read it out to our children. We all sat on the carpet and started to work. The children were really drawn into the plot and tried to plan out the whole story. It took a long time for them to come back to just a small development...really only the next couple of paragraphs, they needed to work out the whole plot as if they were writing a complete story. Also they realised that we needed to end on a cliff-hanger. The ideas for that were quite amazing! Having got over these hurdles we got the next chapter together, I drafted it as they came up with the ideas. It took about forty minutes and it was rapidly approaching lunchtime. I set a group of children to type it and send it back but it was obvious at this point we had taken the whole morning to get only a few hundred words together...not much of a story was going to be made.

The afternoon progressed at a slightly quicker rate, there were no hold ups and we had the story started. The Welsh school had a small group of year 6 pupils working on it and I soon had to draw my class back to a smaller working group of year 4s. Luckily I had an LSA for a while in the afternoon and she typed up two of the chapters.

In another hour of course I could see another problem looming...finishing by end of school. As I worked with the group mid afternoon I was trying to steer the story towards a conclusion. I did so fairly well and was pleased with the result. The result must have been some absolutely frenetic writing by the Welsh school to take us wildly away from a conclusion and it was 2.45pm, we finish at three.

Instead of a story to finish the day I talked to the children, wrote down their ideas, steered them once again towards a

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conclusion and sent them home. It was now three o' clock, the other school must finish about half past...so I typed up the conclusion and managed to send it to them in time for it to be read out before they finished.

About an hour later I had a proper conversation with the Headteacher of the other school. He was the person who contacted me the previous evening. We agreed that we had both had a very enjoyable day. The children had learned a lot about developing a story...each time it had to be moved on from an unexpected, different point. Each time it needed to end on a cliff-hanger for the other class to take over. The whole project was exciting, stimulating, fun and inspirational for the children. I would urge more teachers to try interactive projects and make the most of the instant communication feature of the Internet.

During the evening I typed it up for the school's web page. I had managed to get a few children to produce pictures during the afternoon; I used them to illustrate it. The result can be seen at http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/manorlh/bookday/story1.html.

Carol Rainbow
IT Co-ordinator at The Manor CP School
http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/manorlh/

FREE JAVA FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS More than half a million nonprofit academic institutions at all levels of instruction will be eligible for free one-year software licenses from Sun Microsystems for software development tools based on Sun's Java computer language. Sun says that the value of software donated under this program could run into the billions of dollars. (Dow Jones Newswires 8 Apr 98) http://www.sun.com/edu/java/free

You can also order a free copy of Visual Age for Java from the IBM web site if you are a school.

SEIKO'S PC WATCH Seiko Instruments will introduce the world's first wearable PC on June 10 in Japan. The $285 "Ruputer" wristwatch will be able to download data, including text and pictures, from other PCs, and will come loaded with three programs that run on Windows 95. Users will be able to exchange data via infrared signals. (Investor's Business Daily 9 Apr 98)

LOST DATA AT STANFORD BUSINESS SCHOOL When outside contractors failed to verify that data had been saved before attempting to move two servers from the Stanford Business School to the university's central computer system, 10 to 15 of the school's 200 faculty and Ph.D. candidates lost their databases, research notes, and parts of books or dissertations. The dean of the school says, "This was a disaster. Even though lots of people recovered their work, some people lost data irretrievably."

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WIND98 NEW ERROR CODES

FYI ...
> Subject: FW:
thought you might like to have a look at this !
>> ——Original Message——

>> From: Decroix Gregoire

>> Subject: Windows 98.

>> After trying Windows 98, following new messages appeared.:

>> 1.. Smash forehead on keyboard to continue.
>> 2.. Enter any 11-digit prime number to continue.
>> 3.. Press any key to continue or any other key to quit.
>> 4.. Press any key except... no, No, NO, NOT THAT ONE!
>> 5.. Press Ctrl-Alt-Del now for IQ test.
>> 6.. Close your eyes and press escape three times.
>> 7.. Bad command or file name! Go stand in the corner.
>> 8.. This will end your Windows session. Do you want to play another game?
>> 9.. Windows message: "Error saving file! Format drive now? (Y/Y)"
>> 10. This is a message from God Gates: "Rebooting the world. Please log off."
>> 11. To "shut down" your system, type "WIN."
>> 12. BREAKFAST.SYS halted... Cereal port not responding.
>> 13. COFFEE.SYS missing... Insert cup in cup holder and press any key.
>> 14. CONGRESS.SYS corrupted... Reboot Washington D.C? (Y/N)
>> 15. File not found. Should I fake it? (Y/N)
>> 16. Bad or missing mouse. Spank the cat? (Y/N)
>> 17. Runtime Error 6D at 417A:32CF: Incompetent User.
>> 18. Error reading FAT record: Try the SKINNY one? (Y/N)
>> 19. WinErr 16547: LPT1 not found. Use backup. (PENCIL & PAPER.SYS)
>> 20. User Error: Replace user.
>> 21. Windows VirusScan 1.0 - "Windows found: Remove it? (Y/N)"
>> 22. Welcome to Microsoft's World - Your Mortgage is Past Due...
>> 23. If you are an artist, you should know that Bill Gates owns you and all your future creations. Doesn't it feel nice to have security?
>> 24. Your hard drive has been scanned and all stolen software titles have been deleted. The police are on the way.

Is it only me . . . I noticed that when my dear users turn off a Windows 95 (or 98) station and it runs scandisk, there is ALWAYS an invalid long filename . . . and it is ALWAYS at 41%

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XEROX KIT

by David Palmer

In the strange VR world I inhabit I was sure I had spoken to you about the Xerox Work Centre. As far as I can see by scrutinising the last precious issue, I haven't . (unless of course it was the search that was virtual . .) . . so here goes:-

The Xerox Work Centre is entering the market for all-singing all-dancing machines that do as many jobs as they can. In this case, the jobs are printing, scanning, copying and faxing. The Good News is that it is a pretty good fax machine - the Bad News is that it only scans in black and white. I really can't understand this. I also can't understand why no other review has mentioned it - and I have to say that the advertising is (to put it kindly) ambiguous. I also found that the sheet feeding (in all modes) was very ropey at first - but it did settle down when the gloss wore off the rollers. (Which reminds me of my Aunt Gladys and her first three cars . . .but that is another story)

The Work Centre arrived at the same time as some other devices that wanted to use the parallel port - and Idiscovered that the default setting for this orifice was set as low as possible. When re-set to ECP, all was sweetness and light. But why is this the default setting?

The Xerox PR dept are super and when they towed the Work Centre away they were very concerned that I would be short of kit so they offered me the Home Centre . . .

Although I had the same feed problems to start off with, I soon came to feel much more kindly towards this machine. For a start, it does not have the bizarre control panel that asks you the same sort of questions that you get on these automated phone systems. Indeed, the only controls you have are three buttons - which you can only press when they want to be pressed . .

And it looks rather spiffy. I tell all my trusting visitors that it is a bread maker . . It doesn't fax - but it does scan and print very nicely thank-you. My only nit-pick is that when it scans or copies it produces a fancy animation. I am sure that if one could turn this feature off, it would be a lot quicker.

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MULTIMEDIA AUTHORING

by Barry Mawer

Presented at the 1997 User Group Weekend by Simon Williams, Head of Information Technology at Churchill Community School.

I have had several good reports on the Windows on the Weather multimedia package and Simon immediately established his credentials by mentioning that he was the author of that and several other titles. He had also brought a vast array of hardware, including his home PC, and software. Facilities were available to photograph, record sound and video, and transfer those files to a PC where a range of software was available.

Simon spent the first hour and a half session giving us a thorough introduction. He covered: his school and the development of multimedia there; the range of multimedia software available with many examples; design philosophy and went on to common skills, suitable packages, utilities and hardware.

In the second session we chose our own practical topics and Simon was a constant source of help. Web authoring had been very popular during the weekend and many people chose the option of designing a multimedia web page introducing themselves. Other course members started looking at PowerPoint but gave up when they found it would not allow branching; Simon recommended Compel as a suitable package. I looked at some network management programs which Simon had produced with Multimedia Toolbox.

I felt that I should include some multimedia content in this article but sound and video do not reproduce well on paper so I compromise with a picture of Simon, taken during the morning.

We were given summary notes of the introduction and I include below, with permission, the list of Internet resources that Simon provided.

The ClipArt Collection www.ist.net/clipart/
Clipart list
www.webplaces.com/search/
3D Images
www.halcyon.com/blackbox/welcome.html
GIF animator
www.andatech.com/vidcraft/demo.html
Video editor for MPEG-1
www.duplexx.com/ifilmedit.html
Web Multemedia Guidance
cutl.city.unisa.edu.au/eduweb
Sound files from SoundRing
www.sound-ring.com

Also worth mentioning as a resource is the '75 years of the BBC' CD that each school should have received. If you cannot find yours then it can be purchased from Video Plus Direct, PO Box 190, Peterborough. PE2 6UW. The CD ID is 806063 and it contains many hours of sound and video files. The cost is £12.99 plus postage £1.75.

Simon can be contacted at churchil@rmplc.co.uk and you can see the Churchill Community School web site at http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/churchil/index.html

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high capacity black + 3 colours	£16.50	PN 064-159
HP Deskjet 1200c black + 3 colours	£75	PN 064-016
HP Deskjet 1600c black + 3 colours	£77	PN 064-150

Accessories		
CD storage cube	£6.50	PN 0A1-382
Disk box - 50 x 3.5" capacity	£4.45	PN 037-099
Disk box - 100 x 3.5" capacity	£5.45	PN 037-100
System dust cover	£9.95	PN 059-388

Mice for older PCs		
PC-186 mouse	£39	PN 022-620
X Series mouse	£39	PN 017-603
2 button serial mouse	£19	PN 033-623
3 button serial mouse	£15	PN 044-115

To place an order, or to request a copy of the RM Direct! catalogue either fax FREE on 0800 833872 or telephone on 01235 826216.

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Surrey, KT10 0BR

INVOICE **Application Form for Training** (please photocopy as necessary)

Research Machines User Group
21st Annual Training Weekend
October 24th - 25th 1998

Please indicate your session choices below using the session letters **A** to **E** and on the reverse side of this form **please write** about your level of experience if requested in the details of the courses.

	Saturday Afternoon 1.30 - 4.45	**Sunday Morning** 9.00 - 12.15	**Sunday Afternoon** 1.30 - 4.45
First Choice			
Second Choice			

Please indicate any special dietary requirements e.g. vegetarian, vegan etc.

Delegate Rates	Members	Non-members*
Full Weekend $	£230 1st del.	£255 1st del.
After 1st	£220 pp	£230 pp
Sunday Only	£100 pp	£125 pp

All the above prices include meals as appropriate.

Partners (no training) £20 extra to cover B & B.
Other meals to be paid for as taken.

If any other combination is required, please telephone number below.

$ Inclusive of accommodation with en-suite bathroom
* Inclusive of 1 year's membership of RM User Group

There are some non-smoking bedrooms.

Please tick here if one is preferred .....

(There is No guarantee that one will be available)

Please return your completed forms to: Maureen Wernham, RMUG Training Weekend, FREEPOST, Esher, Surrey. KT10 0BR
Telephone: 0181 3981948.
Or Email mwernham@rmplc.co.uk

I am a RMUG member/non-member* and I apply for registration for the complete Weekend/Sunday only* at a fee of £ .....
(* please delete as appropriate)

I enclose a cheque payable to RMUG TRAINING WEEKEND for the FULL amount (if this is impossible then a deposit of £50 is required).

Name: _____

Establishment: _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Daytime telephone _____

Evening telephone _____

e-mail address _____

Please add any comments or requests here and carefully cellotape the three edges before posting

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Product	*Price Order*	*Code*
Microsoft 3 CD Bundle	£49	0A2-664
Microsoft Musical Instruments	£25	035-885
Microsoft Art Gallery	£25	041-026
Microsoft Ancient Lands	£25	042-248

How to order:
1. Complete the order details using your own order form
2. Add carriage charge at 1.25% of the total order value (minimum £5.00)
3. Add VAT at the current rate on the whole amount to give the total order value
4. Send your order to us: FREE fax 0800 833872
5. Choose how to pay: if you have an account with RM we will invoice you in the normal way, if you don't have an account we can open one for you (call RM Sales Desk on 01235 826868 for details)

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Training Session Programme

SATURDAY	9.30 a.m. onwards Registration. 10a.m. to 11.a.m. Coffee 11 a.m Keynote Speaker: Dr. Chris Fowler - Manager of BT's Education & Training Research Program 12.30p.m. to 1.30 p.m. Buffet **Lunch**				
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
SATURDAY 1.30 - 3.00	ACCESS 97	VISUAL BASIC	CAD	WEB AUTHORING	TRAINING ISSUES
3.15 - 4.45	"	"	"	"	"
5.00 - 6.00	RM	UPDATE			
6.00 - 7.00	RMUG	A.G.M.			
8.00	RMUG	DINNER			
9.30 approx.	OPEN	FORUM	- Question	the RM	Panel
SUNDAY 9.00 - 10.30	WORD 97	PUBLISHER	CROCODILE CLIPS ----------	INTERNET ACCESS	MS NET-MEETING
10.45 - 12.15	"	"	TEXTILE CONTROL	"	"
12.30 - 1.30	Buffet Lunch				
SUNDAY 1.30 - 3.00	EXCEL 97	POWER-POINT	CONTROL	INTERNET ACCESS	MS SMALL BUSINESS SERVER
3.15 - 4.45	"	"	"	"	"
5.00 - 5.30	PLENARY	SESSION			

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RM User Group
21st Annual Training Weekend
October 24th & 25th 1998

Training Programme

The 20th Annual RMUG Training Weekend will provide an ideal opportunity to obtain IT INSET in a most productive, cost-effective and enjoyable way.

Location

The De Vere Hotel, Swindon is located very close to Junction 16 of the M4 motorway, about 90 miles west of London and 30 miles east of Bristol. The hotel has very good sports facilities, including a swimming pool.

Cost

Delegate rates	*Members*	*Non-members**
Full Weekend $	£230 for 1 then £220 pp	£255 for 1 then £230 pp
Sunday Only	£100 pp (inc. lunch)	£125 pp (inc. lunch)

Partners sharing room (no training) £20 extra to cover B&B - other meals to be paid for separately.

Other combinations may be available upon request.

$ Inclusive of accommodation with en-suite bathroom and all meals

* Inclusive of 1 year's membership of RMUG.

This year we are asking for you to send the FULL amount on applying, as the hotel requires a very large deposit by July. If there are problems with this please send £50 deposit and negotiate with Maureen explaining your problem.

Session Structure

The sessions on Saturday and Sunday will include workshops and hands-on experience as well as lectures and demonstrations.

Training will take place in small rooms with limited numbers. In addition to the formal programme of sessions there will be opportunities for discussion with both other delegates and RM staff. Throughout the weekend a number of RM staff have volunteered to be available to discuss individual issues and concerns.

The provisional timetable is given here and delegates are requested to select a first choice and a reserve for each of the three main sessions. Whilst every effort is made to provide delegates with their first choices it should be noted that some sessions are very popular and are quickly filled (first come first served basis).

Saturday evening an Open Forum will take place giving you an opportunity to ask an RM panel any general questions.

For Further Details please contact:

Maureen Wernham on 0181 398 1948 or e-mail address mwernham@rmplc.com.uk or write to her at

RMUG Training Weekend, FREEPOST, Esher, Surrey. KT10 0BR.

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TRAINING WEEKEND SESSIONS

Saturday 1.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.

A. ACCESS 97

This is a 'hands-on' course designed for delegates who have some experience of Access or a similar database. The presenter will try to aim it at the level required by participants which means that on applying you must indicate what you expect it to provide for you.

B. Getting started with VISUAL BASIC

Visual Basic for Applications is the programming language provided with MS Office and Office Professional - much the same as standard Visual Basic. It is the "glue" between and within the Office applications allowing customisation and integration. This is very much an introduction to these Object Oriented facilities and would suit those with linear programming experience or those prepared to struggle along and pick up new skills empirically!

C. CAD

This 'hands-on' session will present another look at the Designview CAD software that is widely used in schools. Again it will help to know what experience you have of this software so please indicate when booking.

D WEB AUTHORING

A practical session on creating web pages, including a look at different web publishing tools. Also, hints and tips on how to develop an effective school intranet.

E. TRAINING ISSUES

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS ON TEACHER ICT COMPETENCE

A look at the time scale, requirements of teachers and institutions and some pointers to the future.

Sunday 9.00 a.m.to 12.15 p.m.

A WORD 97

It is intended that this 'hands-on' session will concentrate on applying the software for specific uses, such as producing a school newsletter or booklet, incorporating graphics. It will help the presenter to know to what your particular needs are. Please indicate when booking.

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B MS PUBLISHER

This is a 'hands-on' look at this versatile program to see its potential for publishing in a school situation. The level of your use of this will help the presenter to use the time more effectively.

C CROCODILE CLIPS

This software simulates electrical and electronic circuits. Crocodile Clips has uses in Physics, Electronics and IT. It allows the user to experiment at the simple batteries plus light bulbs level up to op-amps and latches; the simulation is reasonably sophisticated. This course will concentrate on using the program in the classroom.

TEXTILE CONTROL - Husqvana

A look at this textiles package and its use in the curriculum

D INTERNET ACCESS

The Internet will be available throughout the weekend with RM staff in attendance should you need help.

E. MS NET Meeting

A guide through the installation of NetMeeting on an RM Connect network, including ILS, Realtime audio and video and the advantages of using WIN98. (It sounds like a techies delight!)

Sunday 1.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.

A EXCEL 97

This 'hands-on' session is intended to show how to use Excel for Lists, Tables and for modelling. If there are other areas that you would like to know about please indicate when you book.

B. POWERPOINT

This is a 'hands-on' course that will show you what PowerPoint has to offer. If you have specific requests please indicate this when booking.

C CONTROL

This course will use Lego Dacta software and kits to illustrate the use of Control in the classroom.

D. INTERNET ACCESS

The Internet will be available throughout the weekend with RM staff in attendance should you need help.

E MS SMALL BUSINESS SERVER

An overview of Microsoft's cut down server options, including installation issues and the use of administration wizards.

A LESSON IN SYMMETRY

by David Palmer

Another popular lesson is one in which we explore some of the facilities of PaintShop Pro and, along the way, create a seamless tiling using some principles based on vertical & horizontal symmetry.

We also make use of a handy bit of kit - a digital camera from ACS which plugs into the parallel port. I have this set up on a station with a stool at the right point so it is in focus. Although this camera only costs £70, it does have a focusing lens! I call each student to the camera station which is running the camera in video mode and freeze a frame when I see the student is in the right place. I say 'Thank-you, you can go back to your place' and by the time the student is back at their work-station, the saved frame is in their 'n' drive. They have to open the picture and copy a section of it with dimensions of 50 by 50 pixels. The dimensions can be checked in the status bar as the selection tool is dragged across the original. I ask them to include a couple of features, say nose and one eye (Fig 1 showing selection). Then they paste as a new image, enlarge the canvas to 200 by 200, paste as a new selection, flip, paste as new selection, mirror, paste as new selection and flip & mirror. Each selection is 'docked' next to the original bit so that the edges match. One edge of the first two selections matches and the last selection will fit in to the obvious space once it has been flipped AND mirrored.

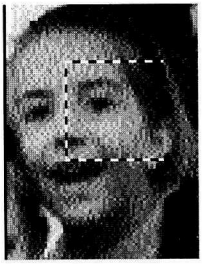
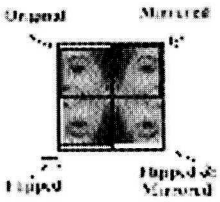
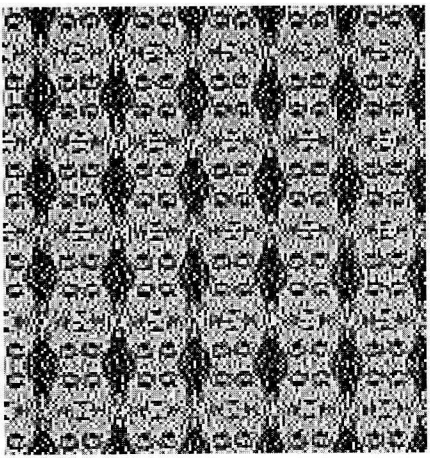


Fig 1

The whole picture is now selected and copied and a new space created to be 800 by 600. When the image is pasted in several times as a new selection, it will fit side by side like a good tile. The latest version of PaintShop will allow you to use any open image as a fill which is much faster than fitting the tiles together. I demonstrate the whole process on the projector and everyone moves back until the final product becomes a colourful pattern, then moves forward until that magical moment when you suddenly see the features again!





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TALES FROM THE RIVERBANK

by Steve Rochford

I'm writing this in early June which marks the end of my first complete year of using a network based on Windows NT workstations with an NT server. Just to make it interesting, we also have about 20 machines running RM Net LM and all these are part of the same RMNET domain. It's been an interesting year and I've learned an awful lot about how NT works. I'm absolutely convinced that I made the right decision and I'm pleased to see that RM Connect will be offering NT 5 workstation when it becomes available. There's a problem with any system which uses machines with local hard discs; users can change files, delete files or install their own new files on the disc. RM's file protector mechanism makes for a more secure system than native Windows 95 but it's not perfect. I've recently been reading the newsgroup alt.ph.uk (the 'ph' bit apparently comes from the term 'phreaking') containing details of ways various people have found of bypassing its security. NT makes things better because you can have very strong security on the files on the disc. For example, no user needs access to the files in the root directory of the hard disc (ntldr, ntdetect.com and boot.ini) so you can set permissions so that users cannot even read these files, let alone change or delete them. You can change the permissions on executable files so that users can read or execute them but cannot delete them. It takes time to get things set properly and it's well worth reading the Zero Administration Kit for some ideas. One of the problems with NT4 is that users need write access to a disturbing number of system files and directories; I believe that NT5 fixes some of this. There are also applications which need write access to too many files - CorelDraw is a complete nightmare needing write access to configuration files (which would ideally be stored in a user's area but Corel's idea of a network install is to put nearly 100Mb of files in the user's area!) and to the program directory. I think I've worked out the best way of setting up the system and I've definitely produced a good way of reinstalling a system if it does get completely messed up (fortunately this has only happened to about 3 machines out of 70 in the year so I think I must have it nearly right!) Having Windows NT has allowed pupils to start using long filenames. This has the disadvantage that their files can appear to vanish if they go to an old Net LM machine (Lan Manager can't show the long names) It also stops people thinking about meaningful names for files; it's too easy to just accept the offered name in Word (which will be the first line of text). I think that it's much better to store files in a carefully planned directory structure. For example, I could have a file called "expenses April 1998.xls" or I could have a directory called 1998 which contains another directory called expenses and finally a file called April.xls. The advantage of the latter approach is that I can then keep all my files from this year together and then group them by topic. Alternatively, I might have expenses as a top level directory and then files called (eg) 98april.xls, 98may.xls etc. Why put the year first? It means that a quick look at the directory in alphabetical order will group the files in years. It would be even better to put 9801.xls, 9802.xls because then the months also appear in the right order (note that 981.xls is a bad choice because it will be followed by 9811 and

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9812 before 982.xls!) In the end, of course, file naming is down to personal preference. What you should consider is that you should be trying to make it easy for you to find any file quickly and easily. One of the most useful utilities I have is FMView. This is a simple add on to Explorer and File Manager which allows you to quickly view files from a right mouse click. It understands a huge range of file formats (including Office 97) and can also show files in hex or text view if desired. It's shareware and is available from http://www.wincorner.com. Last September we made a decision to offer e-mail to all our pupils and staff. I spent some time looking for a program which I could use as a mail gateway to collect mail from our ISP and to deliver mail from our users out to the Internet. In the end I settled on a package called NT Mail (http://www.ntmail.co.uk) which does the job fairly well. I'm using version 3 which has a few minor 'issues'; there is now a version 4 available which looks as if it adds some useful features. In use it's very simple. You run an install program which creates the necessary files and directories on your NT Server, you give it the details of your ISP and tell it the times at which you want it to collect and deliver mail. It then does just that, all day, every day, for months at a time. There are problems with e-mail which I don't think are the fault of NT Mail. For example, I thought that I would like to limit the size of incoming mails but what actually happens is that the program collects the mail, looks at the message, decides its too big and promptly returns it to the sender. This means that the big e-mail now goes twice through my modem, taking twice as long as if I'd simply accepted it. I think this is because it's not possible to find the size of a file in a POP mailbox without collecting it but it's extremely annoying! I use Microsoft Internet Mail as the mail client. It's worked well and a bit of judicious editing of the resources in the mailnews.dll file mean that users cannot alter any of their personal details in order to fake e-mail (their details are automatically filled in at logon time by a logon program) The only problem is that some users manage to acquire huge amounts of mail in their inbox but that's hardly the fault of the mail client! I've found that most people have just used mail with no problems and little or no training (it's interesting to note that the Senior Management feel that they need training when no-one else does but that's a separate story!) I'm not sure if we need e-mail; I suspect we have it because it's one of the things which schools now do. I've seen some serious use of e-mail; sending requests for information for coursework, for example, but I've also seen lots of trivial use; pupils sitting next to each other sending e-mail and then talking to each other - 'have you got it yet' etc. There are also pupils who use it to keep in touch with parents and other relatives or friends in other schools or at university, for example. This is obviously not a bad use of e-mail but I'm not sure that the school should fund it; we certainly wouldn't allow pupils to make unlimited phone calls! At the same time as we started offering e-mail, we also offered Internet access to all pupils and staff. This is currently made available on a limited number of machines which access the Internet via a proxy server. We are using Microsoft Proxy Server for this and I've been very pleased with the way it works. I've also been pleased that a few pupils who are normally highly critical have been pleased with the speed that the system works because there is only a single 56K modem serving the system. We will move to using ISDN at some point in the near future but getting details from BT about this has proved almost impossible. I know I shouldn't be surprised at the sheer incompetence of BT's ISDN sales people but I still find it amazing that they manage to make any money when they seem unable to give out the simplest pieces of information.

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My local cable company (Cable and Wireless) are actually worse, if that's possible. The cable companies took a large space at BETT in January to persuade us that cable was the future; sadly, nearly six months later, I still have no details from them of the ISDN deal which they may offer to schools. Just as with e-mail, Internet usage has been mixed. I've seen some pupils doing serious research (and some attempting serious research but with no real idea of how to go about it; this is an area which I think IT teaching needs to address). I've also seen large numbers of pupils visiting a wide range of sites; sports, music, news, games and all sorts of wacky things. I monitor Internet use fairly carefully and although we have had some pupils looking for porn I think it's been at an acceptably low level. Much more useful has been our intranet. Nearly 2 years ago we set up a small, file based intranet which was mainly used by pupils for putting up pages on topics of their own choice (X-Files, Star Trek etc). This year, however, more staff have got involved and we now have a wide range of subject resources. Some of these have been downloaded from Internet sites but many have been created by our own staff. The geography department has been particularly active (you can see some of what they've done at http://www.latymer-upper.org/geography but be prepared for long delays as pages load; it's pretty graphics intensive). It's been possible to integrate HTML pages with Excel spreadsheets and Word documents so that pupils can easily access a range of resources. We're running the Intranet using Microsoft Internet Information Server (which comes as part of NT Server) and I've been quite pleased with it. Some of the people creating web pages use Notepad and write 'raw' HTML and then upload it (using FTP Explorer, a free, very easy to use, graphical FTP client) and some use Microsoft Front Page. Front Page makes it very easy to create webs; you need to know nothing about HTML or FTP, you just use a WYSIWYG editor to create pages and save them more or less as you would save a normal file. HTML purists criticise Front Page because some of the HTML it produces is not perfect. I can accept this might be a problem if your site needs to be viewed by a wide range of people and you don't know which browser they will use but in school I know that they're all using Internet Explorer 3.02 so this is not an issue.

I'm so pleased to have another article from Steve. I find his comments about email particularly interesting. I am currently encouraging my users to use Hotmail since there is no management load for me. However, I do have a concern about the time they seem to waste on trivial messages. I also had an offer from postmaster.co.uk to set up a (free) logon screen for any number of users from our school - so they would go to ackworth.postmaster.co.uk for their mail and have e-addresses like jsmith@ackworth.postmaster.co.uk. Although they were very helpful, I didn't take it up since the addresses seem a bit clumsy and one attraction of the Hotmail address was that they could take it away with them when they leave.

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SISYPHUS

from Integrate

Integrate is the magazine from ACITT. ACITT is the professional association for specialist teachers and co-ordinators of IT in schools in the UK. It forms a focus for all debate on the nature and content of IT being taught to students from 4-18.†

ACITT membership is open to anyone interested in specialist IT or IT co-ordination as applied in UK schools. Typically this will include: specialist teachers of IT, IT co-ordinators, Primary postholders for IT, IT technicians and system managers in secondary schools, IT advisors, IT inspectors and IT advisory teachers.

Membership costs £30.00 per year. For student teachers and Newly Qualified Teachers there is a 50% discount to £15.00.

To join: Send a cheque or official order to:

ACITT Membership Secretary 138 Inchmery Road Catford London SE6 1DF

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Ssshhh...

An advertisement in the TES recently asked for someone to teach discreet IT. This is a rare display of honesty on the part of the school. A great deal of IT is, or at least has been up to now, taught pretty discreetly: you really had to look for it.

Of course, it may be that the school is not being honest, but subversive. Perhaps, in other words, it is to be taught without the Governors finding out about it.

Perhaps, though, all it really means is that someone didn't use the on-line thesaurus to check the sense of the word. Obviously, what the school needs is someone who can teach IT....

Uninformacy

Pity the poor overburdened IT co-ordinator who rashly agreed to import a Word table into Excel for a poor overburdened Head of Year. It seemed simple enough: the HoY had, so she said, typed all the figures into a table. All she wanted was for the IT Co-ordinator to convert it into an Excel spreadsheet on the school network.

Unfortunately, as the IT Co-ordinator was to discover, appearances can be deceptive. The table was not a table: it was a series of numbers separated by spaces galore. Even after they'd all been globally replaced by commas, the resulting table still had numbers in the wrong place, and had to be edited "by hand".

What was even worse, the figures had been set out in such a way as to make it impossible to manipulate them the way the HoY wanted. The moral of this story: we ought to make people understand that 90% of a task is completed in the planning and design stage. If they don't understand how to analyse a system, at however rudimentary a level, no

amount of computing power is going to get them out of a jam. In the meantime, has anyone come up with a good way of saying "No"?

Are we missing something?

A recently-released CD ROM on using computers contains an excellent glossary of technical terms. As well as being well-written, the drawings are clear, and there are even sound clips you can listen to where appropriate.

One of the entries in the glossary is Mouse, which features a useful tutorial on how to use one. In order to access this part of the glossary, you have to, er, use the mouse.

In a similar vein, a recent course available on the internet was on the subject of how to use the internet. In other words, you couldn't do the course until you had done the course, unless you'd read a book about it first, in which case you wouldn't need to do the course.

Perhaps these facts are linked, via some vast, invisible, web of paradox. If so, the web must surely contain the idea of the paperless office. It seems to be a natural law, on a par with the law of gravity, that installation of a computer system in a school or office at least trebles the amount of paper generated. As well as the obvious things such as hundreds of draft copies, there are all the experimental printouts - you know, the ones with 18 fonts to a page. Then there are all the manuals telling you how to use the system, and the quick start guides which tell you how to use the manuals.

Perhaps a "good" paradox is the fact that the harbingers of doom who said that computers would put us all out of a job were obviously wrong. Computers create jobs for computer journalists, who review software for the benefit of other computer journalists; software developers, who seem to abide by the motto, "If it ain't broke, still fix it"; and, most of all, computer consultants.

Of course, the ultimate paradox is Virtual Reality. An item appeared in the press recently about a new VR sex simulator. So how long will it be before humanity exists only in a virtual sense, with virtual people having virtual sex, doing virtual jobs, and creating virtual versions of their own virtual reality?

Cybercheek

Gene Teare, co-founder of Cyberia, the cafe where you can compute while you are drinking your coffee, says that the cafe runs sessions for training teachers to use the internet. This is excellent news, because it certainly relieves us professionals of the burden of running INSET.

However, we would not like Ms Teare to think that we are selfish, and that this is a one way street. Consequently, ACITT is proud to announce its new courses in cafe management. Our special half-day workshop goes into the basics of catering, while our full day course shows you how to set up your own cafe business. Advanced courses in setting up a chain of cafes (which, coincidentally, Cyberia is doing) are also available.

Sisyphus sisyphus@tcns.co.uk

Note to cynics: this is a real email address. If you have any items that you think are humorous, strange or just plain interesting, send them to Sisyphus.

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PRINTER'S PIE

by Peter Harris

A Personal View of EXAMINATIONS

What are those blue remembered hills?

These words, which originally come from *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, were used in an Australian film starring Jenny Agutter which showed a brother and sister being rescued by an Aboriginal youth on a *Walkabout*. Percy Cerutty, who trained the great Australian runner Herb Elliott by making him run up and down hills of sand, tells us in one of his books on athletics that a 16-year-old Aboriginal youth is expected to be able to kill a kangaroo even if he has to chase it for 80 miles.

Many so-called "primitive" societies have initiation ceremonies that prepare their young men for adulthood and acceptance into the tribe. I suppose our nearest equivalent is the Graduation Ceremony for our successful students. I must confess that I enjoy operating in the "proud parent mode" and at one such ceremony I well remember the Vice-Chancellor in his speech stating that a good general degree proved that a student had the ability to study, to express ideas and work under pressure – qualities that employers are looking for.

A rough diamond is no use until it has been polished

Peter Drucker, a management guru, tells us that potential in an employee is no use until it has been tested in a real-life situation.

During the days of the Empire, the British Army used the trouble-spots, such as Afghanistan, to turn their soldiers into battle-hardened veterans. Professional football clubs bring their promising players up through junior and reserve teams until they are ready for the first team.

The question is of course: "Does our way of conducting examinations provide the answers we need about the suitability of the candidates for performance in the real world?" There is the well-known criticism of the Vicar who is "so heavenly-minded that he is no earthly use."

Enough is enough, but enough is necessary

Most people today do not accept this Yoga aphorism and tend to measure success by wealth and status.

Rachmaninov left £250,000 when he died in California in 1943; Benjamin Britten left £1,250,000 . Mozart on the other hand, as is well known, was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave, though had he lived it seems certain that *The Magic Flute* (written in German as opposed to the current fashion for Italian) would have restored him to the prestige that he enjoyed as a boy prodigy.

But if we accept conventional wisdom (and I don't!) it seems that our present education system works best for the average and the above-average, but not for those at the top. Everyone knows that Bill Gates was a drop-out from Harvard, and many great literary

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figures did not complete their time at University. The *Daily Mail* published an article entitled "I only excelled after being expelled" – Beryl Bainbridge the novelist, Desmond Bloom the millionaire property tycoon, and Tracy Edwards MBE (the skipper of the first all-female crew to compete in the Whitbread Round The World Yacht Race) were the three people featured.

The Annual Super-Rich List

I was most intrigued to find my name "Peter Harris and family" at number 64 in this year's *Sunday Times* list of the 1,000 richest people in this country (you need £20 million to qualify; only two lottery winners do so). Unfortunately the description read "Caravan Interests" not "General Printers"!

However, what is interesting about the list is shown in a quotation from an article by Philip Beresford, the compiler of the list:

"But what about education? Sadly for those of us worrying about exam marks and whether the children will get into university, formal qualifications do not appear to be very important. Indeed, at least 250 of our wealthiest 1.000 fell behind in their lessons, failed exams and dropped out of school early."

It's Monday morning again

You arrive at work to find the day full of problems.

The newsletter for the local Euro MEP needs the Euro dollar sign.

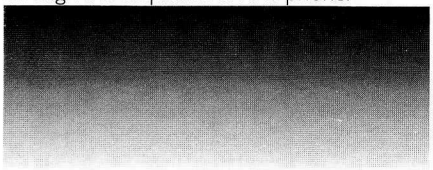
Initially you download a Euro dollar image from the Internet but you find it hard work to place a graphic image into text every time you need it. You ring the British Printing Industries Federation helpline to see if any type manufacturers have issued a "pie" font. They tell you that Microsoft have included the sign as Alt-128 in Windows 98 in Times, Arial and Courier. This is good news as we have been running Windows 98 since January.

The local clothing factory needs a complicated form designing for their export orders.

The form you can design in PageMaker using "multiple paste" or in the Paragraph dialogue box you can use "rule above line" – but you have forgotten some of the finer details, so you get out the User Manual.

The Ackworth Concert Society programme needs graduated tints in colour.

You know that graduated tints can be drawn in Quark XPress but you have forgotten just where the commands are hidden, so you ring your graphic designer friend who uses the programme all the time and he takes you through the sequence on the phone.



You have just bought a new G3 Apple Mac with a 21" monitor and to output colour proofs you want to use an Apple StyleWriter 4500.

There is an old Norse legend told where Thor, the god of war, is tricked into accepting a wager that he can drain a drinking cup. Unbeknown to him, the drinking cup is magic and is linked to the sea at the nearby fjord. Despite all his valiant efforts he fails to drink the sea dry.

This sums up how we felt! When we sent a job down to print we ended up with an error message, "The printer is not responding. Make sure that the current port is selected in the Chooser and that the printer is properly turned on. Click Cancel to terminate printing." We spent three days off and on trying clean installs, unplugging and plugging the wires, trying the printer on other machines until in the end we decided to log on to Apple's Technical

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Information Library, where we found the following statement: "The Color StyleWriter 4100 and Color StyleWriter 4500 are not compatible with the Power Macintosh G3 computers." We had assumed that if we bought an Apple Computer and an Apple Inkjet Printer they would work together – how silly can you get!

It's Examination Time again

Would it not be better if our examinations bore a closer resemblance to real-life situations? The questions could be harder but the support could be greater. I marvel at the participants in "Master Mind" – but give me the use of a good library or even a computer and some CD-ROMs and I could compete!

We tend to examine our students on what they have studied, but in real life we have to provide answers to problems that we are unprepared for, building on our knowledge in some parallel field of learning.

To me it would be more logical to let the students take any books they wished into the examination room and have the use of a telephone and a modem that could connect them to the Internet.

The National Grid for Learning, which is still in its very early prototype form, was initially assumed by the public to be a real physical grid, a network of actual wires that would link all schools and provide a completely new educational service. The message coming from the Government was that schools would be "connected" to this wonderful new service without paying a penny.

In reality it appears that the grid will be simply part of the Internet, but the prototype Web site for the national grid has already become very active with more than 25,000 subscribers. It may not be possible for those taking their examinations to use this facility, but If they could it would bear more resemblance to problem-solving in the real world.

Businessmen who do not know how to fight worry die young

– and so do teachers and students! We must all be appalled and upset when we read in the papers of a student committing suicide because of worries over examination results. It's usually the brighter students who cannot cope; the others have long since come to terms with their abilities or lack of them. As Abraham Lincoln said, "Most folk are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." *The Peter Principle* (People in hierarchical organisations are promoted until they are inefficient) seems to apply to very bright students. The ones who are top of the class at the local sixth form college are shattered when they go to Oxford or Cambridge and discover that they are second-best. A society which leads people to measure their worth purely on their abilities is wrong. As Alfred Adler (who first used the concept of the inferiority complex) said: "All that we can ask of a fellow human-being is that he be a loving husband, a considerate father and a good fellow-worker." The feminist movement was not in full swing then; as the legal documents say, "Statements in the masculine include the feminine."

The quotation at the top of this paragraph continues: ". . . but those who keep the peace of their inner selves are immune from nervous diseases." It is taken from a marvellous book, *Man the Unknown*, written by Dr. Alexis Carroll, a Nobel Prize winner for his work in medicine. The National Curriculum does not include lessons on "How to Fight Worry" – but in adult life it would probably be of more use than "amo, amas, amat . . ." Very few Prime Ministers do not show physical changes in their appearance within a short time of taking office.

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THIS ISSUE'S TYPEFACES

RICHARD WAGNER was the first composer to give each main character in his operas their own tune so that when they appeared on stage the orchestra helped to identify them. In the children's story *Peter and the Wolf,* Prokofiev carried this even further; the music helps the narrator as the tale unfolds. Corporate identities are a fairly recent phenomenon: ICI paid £25,000 for the design of a new logo; when Eddie Shah launched his newspaper *Today* a committee spent countless man-hours trying to find a suitable title; the BBC has just spent millions changing its logo on our television screens and all corporate stationery etc.

JOHNSTON

In 1916 Edward Johnston designed an alphabet to be used in signs for the London Underground Railway – in effect providing a corporate identity. The alphabet is still in use today. Johnston was a celebrated calligrapher and a renowned teacher. One of his pupils was **Eric Gill,** who described himself on his own gravestone as a stone carver – this embraced the two activities for which he was most famous, sculpture and the cutting of inscriptional lettering. He was commissioned by W. H. Smith to paint the sign on their bookshop in Paris; and he was employed by the BBC for work on Broadcasting House in Portland Square. His *Stations of the Cross* in Westminster Cathedral were completed in 1918. In recent days there has been much discussion as to whether or not they should remain there because although he was a Roman Catholic he had one or two unusual ideas about "free love" and other controversial activities,

GILL SANS

The text for this issue has been set in GILL SANS LIGHT, one of the first sans serif typefaces that could be used for setting continuous text. The typeface has an English feel about it and it is still used extensively by the advertising industry. Monotype first cast the type in 1930.

Its most distinctive letters are

"g" and "E"

SOUVENIR

We have used the typeface SOUVENIR for the main headings (and we are showing it here as a text face).

Souvenir was designed by Morris Benton (1872 - 1948), an American who was the son of the inventor of the pantographic punchcutting machine, which enabled amateur designers to produce typefaces without the interpretative skills of the hand punchcutter (the very popular typeface *Cheltenham,* for example, was designed by an American architect, Bertram Goodhue). Morris Benton was also responsible for the ever-popular *New Century Schoolbook,* which is one of the standard laserprinter typefaces, and for Franklin Gothic, which is still used extensively in advertisements.

Souvenir has rounded features which make it less formal than serif typefaces such as Times New Roman, but it is not too casual for lengthy text. It is often used in college catalogues or brochures, advertising or packaging.

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SHOPTALK

by David Palmer

Upgrade

I am still on NetLM2 at the moment. The other day I noticed that our back-ups had been bailing out before they were complete. I assumed that it was due to a dirty tape-head - a problem I have had before - and ordered a new head-cleaning tape. I thought I would create a temporary back-up on another hard-disk and that was when I discovered that the problem was due to some of my dear users saving files with spaces in the filenames. Sadly Sytos does not produce a useful error message in this situation. I believe it will also act as strangely with filenames that begin with lpt and/or con . .

Security

I have some stations that can boot into Windows 95 if they start off the network. I had followed the steps to allow them to pick up a share on the server and decided that it really wasn't worth the trouble. Then I upgraded one of them to Windows 98 - and came back one day to find it happily showing the public and users shares on the server as new drives! This can be done by simply right-clicking on 'My Computer' and choosing 'Map new drive'. If a user has logged on to the Windows logon box with a valid (to NetLM2) username, they will have the same rights on these drives as they would have if the station had booted on the network. The Good News is that they have the correct access rights - although they can see the names of everyone else's directories, they can't see inside them.

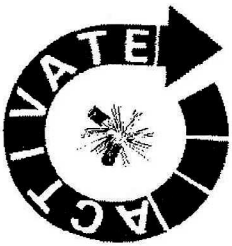
Space-time

I don't know how things are for you these days but I seem to have more and more software - either very cheap or free - and NO time to use it, Even more annoying is a conviction that I am not using the software I have installed as well as possible. A lot of new programs now allow you to create your own Wizards (that's macros to most of us) to do repetitive tasks. I would love to have my own set of wizards - but when can I make them? I agree with BT that I should work smarter not harder but . .

A Good Spell

I read somewhere that diarrhoea is the word that is most frequently misspelt. I have decided to do something about this. When my users come and tell me they have forgotten/lost their password - or someone else has changed it for them - I change their password to diarrhoea. I encourage them to be careful with passwords, we discuss reasonable lengths, not using words etc, but they still seem to have a need to share them with others. I did overhear a little boy earnestly telling his chum, 'MY password is *****'!

We are getting on well with Keybytes (see ad at back of mag) and I'm pleased to hear that they are now installed in over 250 schools!



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GOT A PROBLEM?

One of the main functions of the RM User Group is to assist members who are having problems with either hardware or software, no matter how trivial or complex that problem seems to be. Members of the committee have a wide range of experience in the use of RM equipment, including systems no longer in production, and can be contacted in the evenings or at weekends...times when you are most likely to be mulling problems over and when RM's own Customer Support lines are unavailable.

RM themselves do not claim to have extensive knowledge of products which they don't produce themselves (such as Excel or Page Plus), and although they can tell you how to install such packages on their equipment and how to get started, they cannot be expected to give you in-depth support in using them. On the other hand, the RM User Group has a membership drawn almost exclusively from teachers using these products on a daily basis and consequently have probably "been there, done that, bought the T-shirt" and most likely even "made the jigsaw" too.

So do get in touch with a member of the Committee (see elsewhere in the magazine for contact details) if you are experiencing some difficulty or other or want some advice. If we can't solve the problem ourselves then we probably know someone who can, and if even that fails we can publicise the problem in the RMUG Magazine.

GOT ANY HINTS AND TIPS? GOT ANY GOOD TEACHING IDEAS INVOLVING IT?

If so, your magazine needs you! Look...it's like this: the RMUG magazine is entirely dependent upon contributions from members to fill its pages. This means you! We know for a fact that some members shy away from contributing articles because they feel themselves not to be experts. Don't kid yourselves: if you've done an interesting lesson in your subject from an IT point of view, then you're an expert and we'd like to hear about what you did. What you write doesn't have to have high "nerd appeal"...in fact, forget the "anoraks" completely because most members are normal people like you. Honest.

The editor welcomes all manner of items from "one-liners" to classroom ideas and software reviews, so get writing and make his day (he'll even pay £5 per printed page if he likes it.....Just think: two two-page articles and you've got your annual membership fee back.....).

If (If? When, surely?) you do write an article then the best thing is to submit it to the editor as a disk file in Word for Windows or Windows Write format. He's a reasonable chap so other word processor formats are probably OK too, but it would be worth checking first in case he hasn't got a copy of Edlin Lite for Windows 95. Alternatively you can e-mail it to him or sharpen a few goose quills (but please not carrier pigeons: they just make too much mess).

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Membership Form

Please use capitals

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms .....

Job title (if appropriate) .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Postcode .....

Telephone .....

I enclose a cheque payable to RMUG/order for £25. If you are not enclosing a cheque then please send an official order, indicating clearly to whom the invoice should be sent.

In order to serve our members better we like to know something about them and what they do with their computers. The information you give is confidential .

Are you involved in education?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, with what age range do you work:

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